CLAIRE FALKENSTEIN

TOPOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

Grossmont College
October, 1977

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an exhibition organized by
Grossmont College Art Gallery
16 October–13 November, 1977

Acknowledgments

An exhibition of this magnitude requires the hard work and good will of many individuals. From the Office of the President, Mr. Erv Metzgar, to our own Art Department Chairperson, Marj Hyde, the encouragement and assistance has been most gratifying.

Special thanks go to Mr. Ron Tatro, Sculpture Department, for his dedication and insistence upon the highest caliber exhibition available. His drive for excellence in not only the sculpture program, but gallery programming also is quite appreciated.

Special thanks to Mallory Freeman, Director, Tortue Gallery, for his assistance, information and concern. Likewise to Claire Meyer for her beautiful photographs under very trying conditions.

Above all, our appreciation goes to Claire Falkenstein for her work, her interest, and for being the beautiful person that she is. She has had a pronounced effect on all who have worked with her on this exhibition

J.D.S.

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design: RW Heftmann
photographs: Claire Meyer
type: Central Graphics, San Diego, CA
printing: Crest Offset, San Diego, CA

Foreword

The heroic world of Claire Falkenstein is one which mere mortals are disinclined to enter, the assault of macrocosmic energy being so pervasively captivating that self becomes assimilated into a higher order. Working with metal, glass, wood, paper, and even water, Falkenstein's percipient exploration into the nature of things and their placement in a larger contextual milieu suggests the highest understanding of the natural order. Fused in mythic fire, as Temko is wont to state, her quest becomes that of artist as scientist; nothing large or small escapes her scrutiny. This ardent search for rationale has enabled her to fuse the artist's procreative perceptions and the scientist's probing investigations into a grand statement of mass/movement and time matrix.

The works in this exhibition, never before presented as a body of work, are exemplary in their narrative depiction of mass and time. They are not so much a *presence* as an understanding; their mass is *fluid*, communicating a sense of movement through time. Curvilinear forms return to themselves, restating that which has transpired in a different time reference; thus, there is no beginning or end, only a continuum. Falkenstein's mass, unlike that of "monumental" sculpture, becomes a tangible entity which defines the intangible. One thinks of her "water" sculptures in which metal exists as a point of definition for the interplay of solid and fluid, the metal pointing to a point in space at which the "real" action takes place. We are therefore unable to look at *only* the works themselves, but must deal with a greater entity which we usually perceive as being nothing. Air has become an increasingly important part of Falkenstein's sculpture, pushing back the physical reality and making the mass into an etheric outline of spatial relationships. Perhaps the Pignatelli gates are the highest form of this relationship, though recent works have a bold new approach of a different order.

Whereas previous works encapsulated space, new works, of a more solid mass (sheet metal), separate space. The rising and curved forms of metal create adjacent areas of space, and define the topographical features of those air masses. Thin blades of metal shoot into space like a knife in motion, but exist more as the action itself then the perpetrator. Even the surface of the metal, reflective and highly polished, returns the experience outward in a multidimensional plane, forcing us to see *what* is happening and not what is making it happen. In these works we realize that sculpture is no longer a static mass, but an event of cosmic proportions. The event becomes a non-sequential, ever-changing reflection of the continuous structure of the universe. Classical canons pale in these works, and $e = mc^2$ is the new order. Looking toward the future rather than the past, Falkenstein states ". . . nostalgia for a return to earlier attitudes is denied the artist as it is the scientist." The scientist's world becomes her world, and the acceptance of old dictates incomprehensible.

Perhaps that is what is so awesome about these sculptures; their reflection of the knowingness of universal structure is so perfect and so definitive. Even the smallest handheld sculpture has a *scale* which is infinite in its implications. These are works which could truly be enlarged to any size and remain true to proportion and statement, works which administer to their universal surrounding and, like the atom, have a simplicity which becomes the basis for something of a greater complexity. Falkenstein not only has a clear understanding of the implications of micro and macro-cosmic reality on our everyday lives, but knows how to weave these realities into statements of universal order. Far from assaulting our senses, they encourage us to perceive the natural orderliness of things and the rhythmic flow of mass through time. The totality of existence in both the physical and spiritual sense becomes something not to be feared but embraced, and our seemingly concreteness to be understood as a transitory but magnificent event of heroic proportions.

Falkenstein's topological explorations have also led to an understanding of nature's use of material, a wasteless procedure which sees to the need for precise usage of an exact quantitative measure. Her sculptures are exacted, and abstracted, from this measure. Rather than viewing this as a limitation, she revels in the mysteries available in this procedure. Finite becomes infinite, and static material a means of producing an event. This ecological concern is not so much that of current social trends as of natural selection and processes.

Falkenstein *does* work in her own space/time continuum, one which encourages development of the natural. This, however, is the natural of intimation, not imitation. Her selective processes are in such tune with the cosmic environment that a fluid comprehension and resultant statement exists on an etheric but solid plane. From this plane, Falkenstein manages, through the manipulation of a few sheets of metal, to return us to a basic but lost understanding of the universe we inhabit and our own movement, physically and spiritually, through time. We understand then that we not only inhabit a space and time, but that *we* also affect space and time as we move through our few short years. A simple concept, yes, but so difficult for most.

Jerry D. Szymanski
September, 1977

...nostalgia for a return to earlier attitudes is denied the artist as it is the scientist."

Claire Falkenstein

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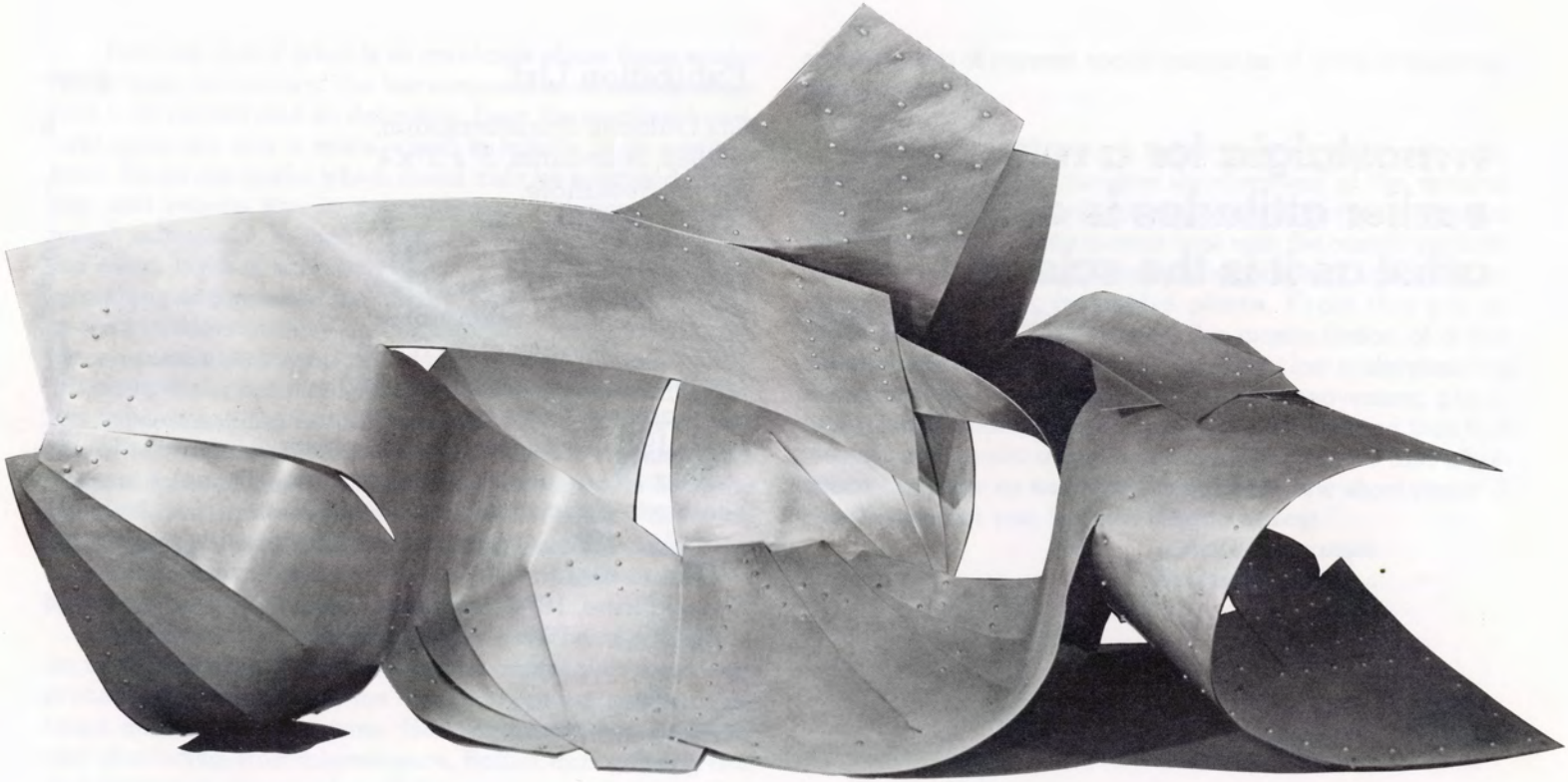

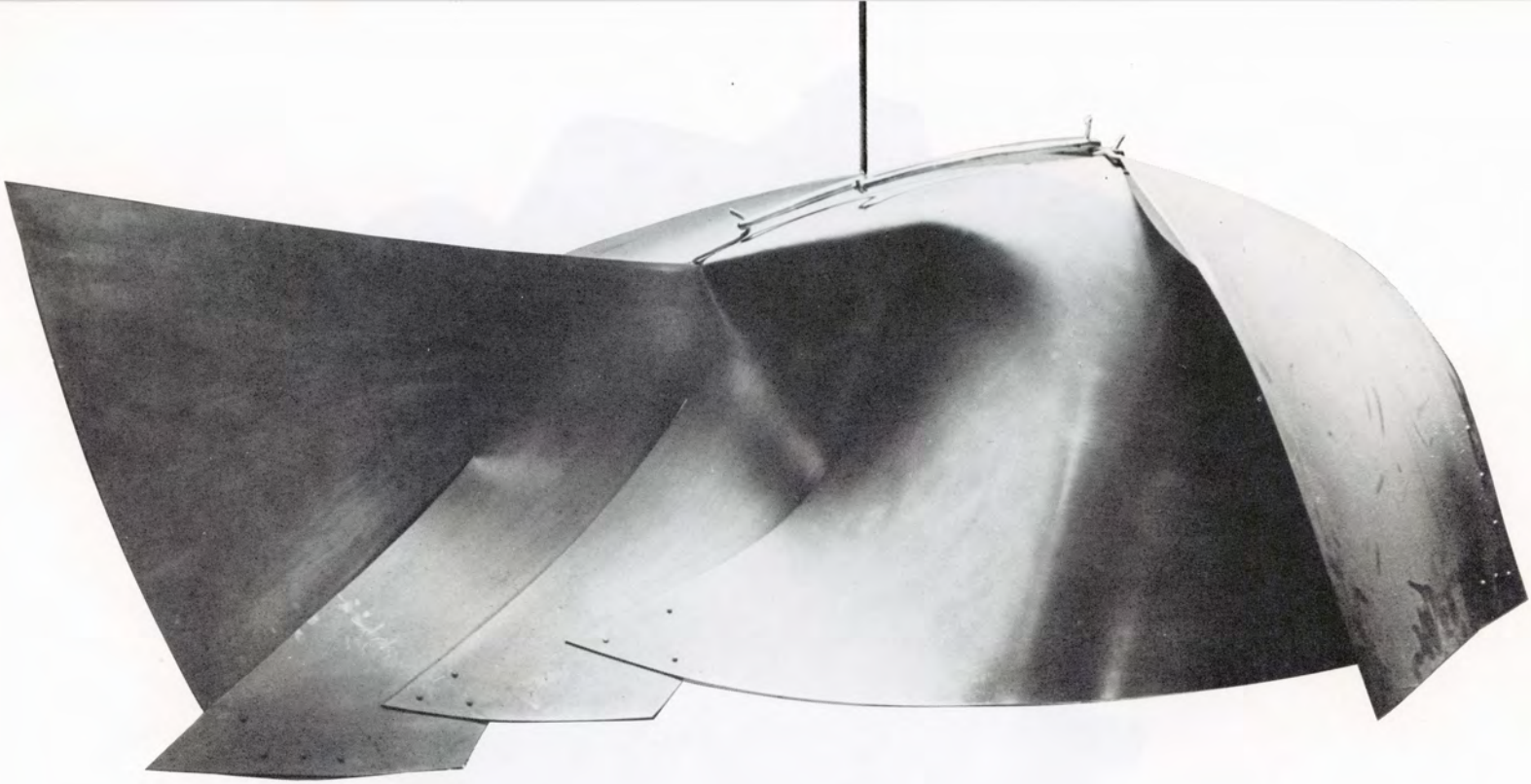

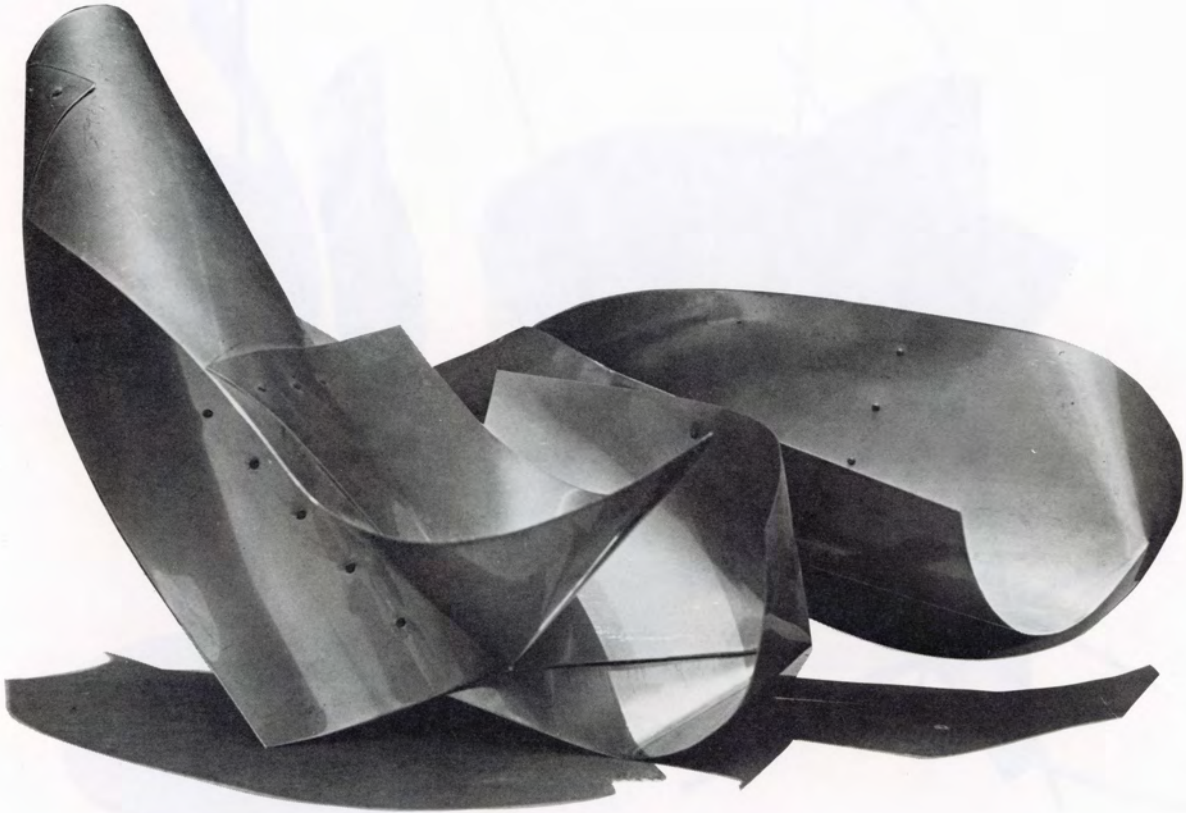

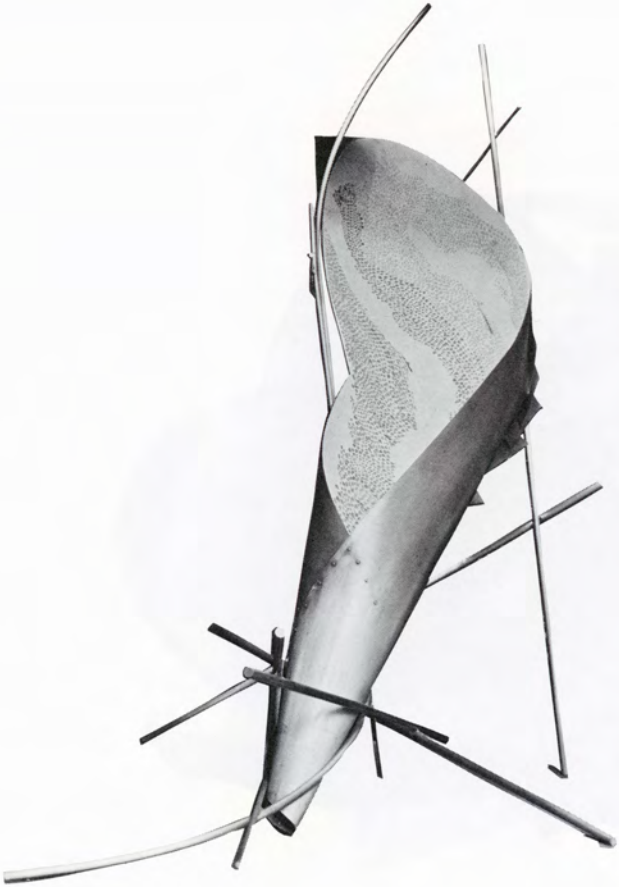

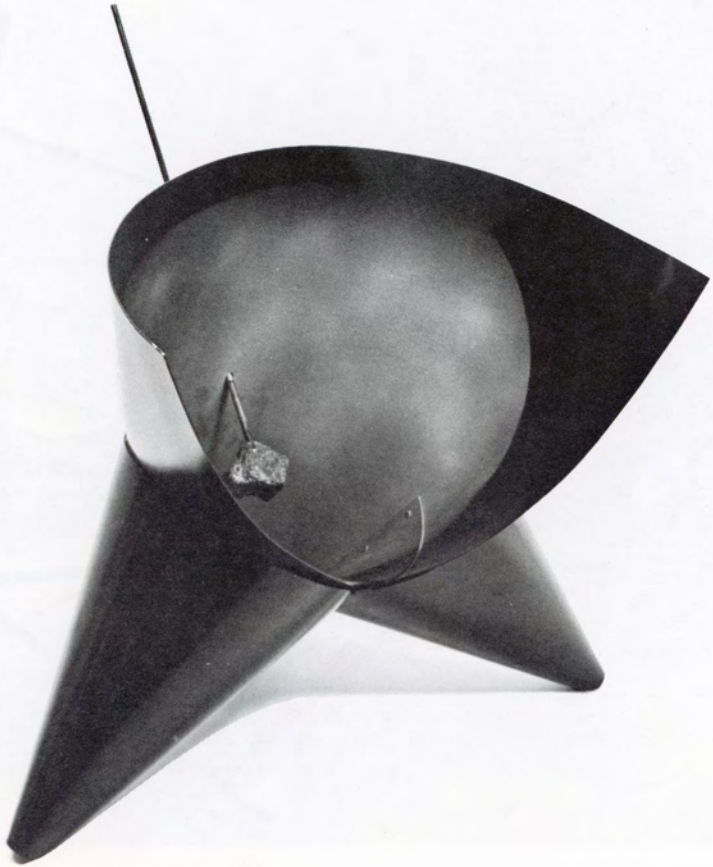

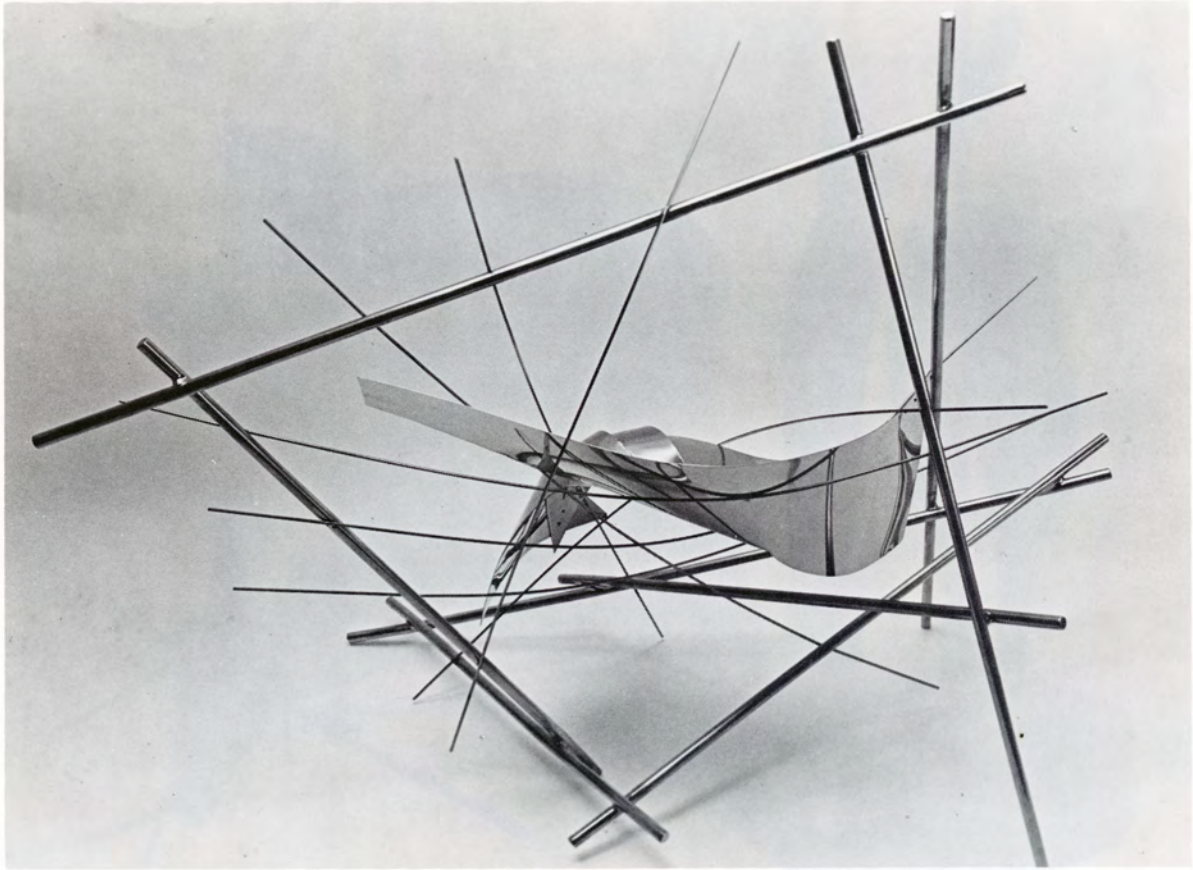

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